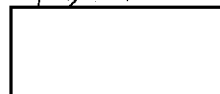


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DDO Registry
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MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Administration

VIA : SSA/DDA

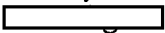
FROM :

Chief,

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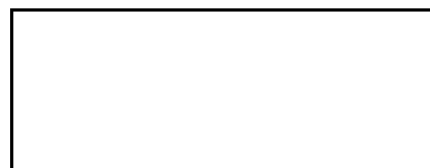
SUBJECT : Annual Conference of  Division Base Chiefs

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1. This is to confirm the invitation already extended requesting that you speak at the forthcoming  Base Chiefs Conference. Your presentation is scheduled for 1000 to 1025 hours, Monday, 15 October 1979 in the DDO Conference Room located in room 6D49.

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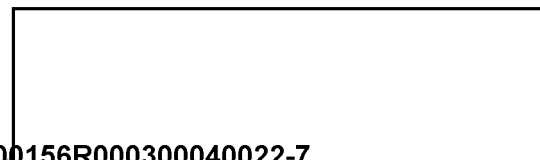
2. In addition to whatever points you may wish to raise, the Base Chiefs would be most interested in your views on the prospects for the Director to more liberally interpret his authority to make administrative decisions independent of regulations which govern other Government agencies.



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STAT

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14 NOV 1979

DD/A REGISTRY
FILE: meetings

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : [REDACTED]
Chairman, Fine Arts CommissionSUBJECT : Luncheon with Mr. Vincent Melzac,
12:00, Friday, ~~16 November~~ 1979
14 December

1. Attendees:

Admiral and Mrs. Turner
Mr. Melzac
→ Mr. Wortman, DDA
Mr. McDonald, D/OL
[REDACTED], Chairman, FAC
[REDACTED] FAC
[REDACTED] Interior designer, OL

2. Mr. Vincent Melzac's association with the Agency goes back 10 years. [REDACTED] a long-time DDO officer now retired, is, like Mr. Melzac, a serious art collector. Their mutual interests led [REDACTED] to suggest to Mr. Melzac that he lend a few paintings and sculptures from his extensive collection for display at Headquarters. The Fine Arts Commission has encouraged continuation of the exhibition of Mr. Melzac's paintings, adding and exchanging works throughout the years. We now have 21 of his paintings on display, most of them in the main corridor on the first floor. (The value of the paintings on loan to us has increased dramatically, from \$30,000 in 1970 to \$400,000 currently.)

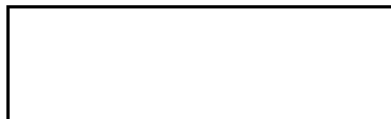
3. Some background material on Mr. Melzac's interest in art is attached. It is extracted from a Corcoran Gallery catalogue, where he was Managing Director in the early 1970's. Mr. Melzac is a very active 70 years old. He retired from business about 10 years ago (I understand he owned a chain of modelling schools) and since then has been engaged in museum work, collecting, as well as being a gentleman farmer in West Virginia (prize-winning horses and cattle). Mrs. Melzac planned to attend the luncheon; unfortunately, she had jaw surgery earlier this week and is still recovering.

4. Mr. Melzac is outspoken in his support for the CIA. He values the relationship highly. He was particularly pleased, for example, to see a painting of his in the background of one of the photos in the

Time coverage of the Agency last year. He believes in art as a means of enhancing the work environment and will probably make the point to you strongly. He wants to continue to help us in this regard and has begun talking to me about presenting some of his paintings as gifts to the Agency. He will probably mention this possibility to you. I would appreciate your support by:

- agreeing with his view on the relationship of work aesthetics, productivity, and the Agency's image;
- expressing our appreciation for his past generosity and our desire to continue to benefit from the display of his paintings; and
- accepting his offer in principle and agreeing to help find a way for us to accept such gifts in a way which is mutually satisfactory.

With regard to the latter point, OGC says that we cannot accept such gifts, but I believe the Agency and Mr. Melzac can work out a satisfactory arrangement by using the Smithsonian Institution as an intermediary. They would accept his paintings and assign them to us.



STAT

✓ cc: DDA

Vincent Melzac's interest in art began early in the 1930's. While attending high school in Cleveland, Ohio, he was invited by a friend to go sketching at the Brandywine farm of American Impressionist painter William Sommer. Melzac came away from that visit with his first art acquisition: a Sommer drawing which cost him one dollar.

Melzac had to put aside his interest in art during World War II. However, he was able to indulge this interest again after the war when he became an executive of the Wolf and Dessauer department store in Fort Wayne, Indiana. His broad-minded boss encouraged executives of the company to become involved in community activities, so he became a trustee of the Fort Wayne Art Museum and began arranging shows of American art there. Few people came to these shows at first, so Melzac began writing an art column for the Sunday Fort Wayne Journal to publicize them. The exhibits and attendance greatly increased.

In 1949 Melzac moved to Washington, D.C. Soon after arriving with his family, he decided to find out what was happening on the local art scene. He was attracted to The American University. William Calfee was head of the department there and, employing visiting professors, lectures, etc., Calfee had greatly increased the awareness, on the part of the A.U. faculty, of the significance of post-war New York painting.

On one of his trips to New York, Melzac was introduced to Willem de Kooning by Jack Tworlov. De Kooning was generous with his time and his talent and often asked Melzac to accompany him to the Cedar Street Tavern, on University Place off Eighth Street (the informal meeting spot for New York artists in the fifties). Melzac also went with de Kooning to several Friday night sessions of The Club, a more formalized group which had grown out of Subjects of the Artists School and Studio 35, congregating point for advanced artists during the 1940's.

Melzac became convinced in 1953 that paintings by some of the New York artists should be shown in the Washington area. However, he had no luck trying to convince the Washington museums. After several meetings with Director Adelyn Breeskin and her Curator, Gertrude Rosenthal, he persuaded the Baltimore Museum of Art to show the paintings of de Kooning, Tworlov, Guston, Vicente, and Pollock. Gertrude Rosenthal remembers being "absolutely floored" by the impact of "Blue Poles," which Melzac encouraged the museum to acquire. At the time they could not afford \$3,000 for a work now worth at least a hundred times that much. They did buy a painting, "Landscape" by Jack Tworlov.

Around this time, Melzac toyed with the idea of becoming an art dealer. The combination of an excellent business sense, a strong acquisitive instinct, and an even stronger desire to help talented, but struggling, artists could have made a venture of this sort successful. De Kooning left the Egan Gallery at this point and encouraged Melzac to found a gallery

by promising that the entire Egan stable would join, along with de Kooning himself. But Melzac was involved with other business considerations and thus let the opportunity slip by.

Four years later, the Watkins Gallery at A.U. mounted an exhibition of Melzac's collection which was held November 9 - December 7, 1957. Joe Summerford, Chairman of the Art Department, wrote the introduction to the small catalogue. In it he stated:

"Mr. Melzac has purchased unpretentiously, but with discrimination, preferring to buy a number of works by artists whose work has appealed to him rather than to attempt to form a collection representative of a particular period. He has, it seems to me, never purchased names. The support he has given artists wherever he has lived has been a service to art and a reflection of his own sincerity...."

The Melzac collection has gone through many changes over the years as works have been sold or given away and replaced by others. Mr. Melzac's policy of buying, in depth, works by artists he admires, has resulted in a collection comprising approximately 50 works by William Sommer (spanning the years 1904-1949), 55 by Norman Bluhm (1957-69), 32 by Jack Bush (1960-68), 68 by Tom Downing (1955-70), 22 by Gene Davis (1953-65), over 175 by Howard Mehring (1954-65), as well as seven Louis' (1954-61), 10 Nolands (1951-64), and many others, bringing the total to over 500 works.

Vincent Melzac has taken many risks, buying, according to his instincts, artists to whose aims he was able, in some measure, to respond. He has rarely bought work by an artist he did not know personally. Kandinsky, the only European he ever bought (which he subsequently sold) is an exception; Morris Louis is another. In the case of Louis, however, although he did not know the artist, he was in touch with Louis' aims through Greenberg, their mutual friend.

In viewing the entire Melzac collection and its development, perhaps the achievements and sensibilities of two germinal artists, de Kooning and Noland, establish, in turn, two types or phases of emphasis. From the time of Melzac's commitment to Noland's work begins his passionate interest in what has come to be known as "Washington Color Painting." This phrase was coined by Gerald Nordland, Director of the former Washington Gallery of Modern Art, in 1965. Nordland presented for the first time together, in an exhibition called "The Washington Color Painters," the six key artists (Louis, Noland, Davis, Downing, Mehring, and Reed), whose achievements he identified as constituting a vital manifestation in the course of American art. This exhibition, held at the Washington Gallery of Modern Art in the summer of 1965, subsequently toured institutions in Texas, California, Massachusetts, and Minnesota.

In the winter of 1970-71, this city finally had another opportunity to see together major examples of Washington Color Painting, when the exhibition, "The Vincent Melzac Collection" was presented at the Corcoran. This exhibition constituted an important event in the history of Washington art. It afforded the public an unparalleled opportunity to experience this work in the context of other important contemporary American paintings as well as making possible, for the first time, in-depth comparisons of the achievements of the respective artists. The Corcoran exhibition, however, merely scratched the surface of the Vincent Melzac Collection, the most comprehensive grouping anywhere of the works of the artists associated with the pioneering development of Washington color art.

The Vincent Melzac Collection, taken as a whole, is the unique achievement of a singularly dedicated and determined man. This collection stands as an invaluable body of material for scholars of contemporary art; the full range of its importance has only begun to be measured.